

USS AZ_OHC_#343 Albert G. Grenz 11-9-1992

Transcription Date: 09/20/09 – Transcriber: STA

[BEGIN AUDIO]

INTERVIEWER: Ready to rock?

[NON-INTERVIEW]

INTERVIEWER: Okay we're rolling. The following oral history interview was conducted on November 9th, 1992 at Midway Island. The time is 9:05 am in the morning. The subject is Mr. Al Grenz. The interviewer is Mr. Daniel Martinez, historian for the national park service. This oral history project is a cooperative effort of the United States Navy [INDISCERNIBLE] Pearl Harbor, Barbara's Point and Naval Air Station, the State of Hawaii Historic Preservation Division, and the National Park Service. For the record could you please state your full name?

ALBERT GRENZ: Albert G – with quotation marks around – G-R-E-N-Z Grenz.

INTERVIEWER: And your age Mr. Grenz?

ALBERT GRENZ: 76

INTERVIEWER: And your current address.

ALBERT GRENZ: 1771 Burr – B-U-R-R – Street, Minnesota, 55117.

INTERVIEWER: And your date of birth?

ALBERT GRENZ: March 8th, 1916.

INTERVIEWER: And place of birth?

ALBERT GRENZ: Artice, South Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: And how many in your family?

ALBERT GRENZ: I have three brothers and I have three sisters.

INTERVIEWER: And how many fought in World War II?

ALBERT GRENZ: Only one.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And was your mother and father alive during your formative years and together?

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ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Where did you go to grammar school?

ALBERT GRENZ: Napoleon, North Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: And high school.

ALBERT GRENZ: Napoleon, North Dakota.

INTERVIEWER: And when did you enlist in the marine core?

ALBERT GRENZ: I enlisted in the marine core in August 1941.

INTERVIEWER: And why did you enlist the marine core?

ALBERT GRENZ: Foolishness. My draft number came up. Uncle Sam wanted me and I accidentally was in Hollywood, California bumming. My father called me – come on home Uncle Sam wants you. So I said the heck with that. I walked down a block and signed up with the marine core.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you choose the marines?

ALBERT GRENZ: I don't know. It didn't make any difference to me but I think their uniform kind of impressed me.

INTERVIEWER: And did that uniform impress the girls?

ALBERT GRENZ: You're not just kidding.

INTERVIEWER: When you said you were bumming in Hollywood could you elaborate a little bit on that?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well back home with three other brothers my father had a grocery store. There was no work. No work out in the country. You couldn't hardly get a job and if you did get a job you worked for a dollar a day and board and I worked a little bit. I bummed out to Portland, Oregon. I did all out on my bumming with the good old thumb. Then I took a trip home. I said I'm not going to work for Safeway anymore. I worked for him a while and then I went back home. Then I thought I'll go to Hollywood. Maybe some movie star will pick me up but none such luck.

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INTERVIEWER: Your Hollywood dream never came true?

ALBERT GRENZ: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever run into any starlets?

ALBERT GRENZ: Run what?

INTERVIEWER: Run in to any starlets?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh yeah I ran into a couple. I mean I can't tell you their name now. But I had some friends out there that used to take me around and golly I can't think of their names anymore. But now getting back to the dream. This was one dream come true that I wanted to get back to Midway. The first 30 years didn't mean anything after I left here. I didn't talk much about it. It's something went by and all at once something clicked. I'd like to get back to Midway. I'd like to see some of my friend that I did time with I call it. At that time I called it prison because I never got around. I didn't get down to the ... where they have the trees and the [PH] PX. PX maybe I got down there maybe four times. They wouldn't let me out the [INDISCERNIBLE] territory. I was [INDISCERNIBLE] sergeant. I had to take care of the tools and all for the working guys. I got to take my shower as usual. Went to a show maybe once a month. One thing they let me go is to church whenever they had church in the old machine barracks right of our barracks and the old tank that was blown up was only about 100 yards from there. They had a big shed and there's where they had services in.

INTERVIEWER: Well before we get That kind of me brings me to how did this prison sentence start? I mean what's ... ?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well you know prison. We put the barb wire around everything else. You couldn't get out. No liberty, no women. Well what else is there? Prisoners got the same choice.

INTERVIEWER: Well let's go back to how this all started? Tell me about boot camp.

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ALBERT GRENZ: Well I had pretty good boot camp. I had a pretty strict sergeant. I was only [INDISCERNIBLE] for using the wrong leg when they started out. That was the last time and went through until graduation. And then the day before graduation old sergeant says let's get out the obstacle course. He didn't have to do that. We were all done with our training. He said we're going out and they have big [INDISCERNIBLE] you call it. Crawl through that [INDISCERNIBLE]. Well everybody did. I couldn't make it. I got in there. I got caught on something underneath the [INDISCERNIBLE]. I couldn't go ahead. I was tied up there. The guys behind me you know they were choking with no air. I had air because I was coming out. So they had to tear up that [INDISCERNIBLE]. It was only [INDISCERNIBLE] about a foot and a half. Picked it up and got us all out. The sergeant was so darn mad that he says Grenz over to that tower. Run in and try to go up with the rope. So I get off and start to go up rope. Got up half way, blump I went in the water. He got mad. He said get going. And I tried it again. I got up a couple feet higher, come down, fell in the water. Boy then he first started to boil. And you know third time [INDISCERNIBLE] and up I go. I didn't make it. I come down splat. Going up there must have been a nail out or a stone in the wood. It hit here. By the time I got out of the water my knee was that big. It swell right on the spot. So they rushed me to the US Naval Hospital in San Diego where I stayed three months uncalled for. They could have got me out of there after less than month but no demand for it so they just kept you there and paid your board and room and all that. But I had a good time. We raced with wheelchairs and that there. Had nice doctors. Good food.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the name of this sergeant?

ALBERT GRENZ: No. I don't remember the name of that sergeant.

INTERVIEWER: You don't have too pleasant of memories of him do you?

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ALBERT GRENZ: No. And then after I got my liberty... . You get your liberty and you go back to your camp there. They had me picked out where I They're not going to put me in a marching unit so they put me in artillery and they said here you're at liberty. Take off. December 7th I take off. Get half way to L.A. announcement on the radio, everybody back to camp. War [INDISCERNIBLE]. The Japs bombed. So I told the fellow to stop. He picked me up. Very nice fellow. And he waited to see whether I get a ride. I got a ride. He would have taken me back but he got a ride right away. They took me right back to where I want to be at camp because I think all the service men were going that way. So I got my gear out – what I had stored away for the three months – and the 7th or 10th of December I sailed for Pearl Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: Okay we're going to cut it right there.

[NON-INTERVIEW]

INTERVIEWER: So you get back to camp and it's December 7th and you've got all your gear going where do you go?

ALBERT GRENZ: Went to on a board ship and we sailed for Pear Harbor. On the way we had torpedo miss us. You should have heard the racket that they had on the ships. We had one destroyer [INDISCERNIBLE] and I don't know how many people there were, guys were on there, but they were all heading for Pearl Harbor. One day out of Pearl Harbor we had one lad – he must have been about 19 years old. He said I can't take anymore of this here. He was so sea sick. I said why don't you go up stand upstairs and get a little fresh air. No I [INDISCERNIBLE]. I said that's a silly thing to do. And he waited around and I talked to him and I went down below again and the first thing I know everybody yelled a man overboard and he jumped overboard and I never could get his name but he said he couldn't take the sea sickness anymore so... . And we got into Pearl Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: And he wasn't recovered?

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ALBERT GRENZ: No they wouldn't dare to stop not with the subs behind them. Yeah so when we got into Pearl Harbor it was just getting dark, sun setting, and we seen all those ships. I named them all that I knew and I wrote them down. I sent my father a letter. These were down. [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: So you saw the battleships of Pearl Harbor?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah and all the [INDISCERNIBLE] and [INDISCERNIBLE] they cut everything out.

INTERVIEWER: They censored... .

ALBERT GRENZ: I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWER: That's alright. That's alright.

ALBERT GRENZ: And that night we went through Pearl Harbor and they showed us a lot of [INDISCERNIBLE]. They showed us [INDISCERNIBLE] you know. So

INTERVIEWER: What kind of things did they show you?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh you could see blood all over and [INDISCERNIBLE] blood [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: Who showed you this?

ALBERT GRENZ: These guys that ... the truck driver that was taking us through to the other place. They took off. [INDISCERNIBLE] ship and we got to board ship on the other side of the island because you couldn't get in any other place there. And I think it was US [INDISCERNIBLE] and we took off for Wake Island the next morning.

INTERVIEWER: This even of Pearl Harbor deeply affected you did it?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh it did.

INTERVIEWER: Did you finally realize what this war was going to be all about?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you scared or were you just mad, outraged?

ALBERT GRENZ: I don't know. Outraged, mad. But it got me so

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INTERVIEWER: Does Pearl Harbor still affect you like that?

ALBERT GRENZ: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: Just the memory of what you saw?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah. A few years ago, twenty years ago, I come through there and I went up to the [INDISCERNIBLE] and I told him I was here 20 years ago when they had all this here and he took me through the old channel and showed me the ships and everything else and told me a lot more than I'd seen that night. And a very nice guy. And when he got back he said [INDISCERNIBLE] have got to put you on the Arizona ship. And he took me through there and that.

INTERVIEWER: You went to the Arizona Memorial?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah. And you know I think the first person that talk [INDISCERNIBLE] they should not talk ... put it as bad as it was. And it hurt. So we took for Wake the next morning. Got about a day out of Wake and

INTERVIEWER: Now let's go back and make sure that people understand. You were part of the relief force to go relieve Wake. I believe Admiral Pi was in charge at that time.

ALBERT GRENZ: Now you got me on who's in charge there.

INTERVIEWER: How many ships went out and what was the [INDISCERNIBLE]?

ALBERT GRENZ: There were two ships as much as I know. And in the morning when we heard that Wake fell they said we're turning around and going in the midway but there was only one ship. I don't know what happened to the next one due to the fact that someone said the ship was sunk so But there was nothing around just a few boards floating and no survivors that we could see. We kind of looked. Couldn't see nothing. But imagine that night they still traveled because we didn't have an escort and I couldn't understand that. Usually they have some kind of escort but there they didn't.

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INTERVIEWER: Where you a little nervous?

ALBERT GRENZ: Not just kidding. I couldn't swim.

INTERVIEWER: You don't know how to swim?

ALBERT GRENZ: No.

INTERVIEWER: Still?

ALBERT GRENZ: Still don't know how to swim. At the bottom I can walk but I cannot swim. I hate to say that but I should have learned. I had the opportunities. Didn't take them. So... .

INTERVIEWER: So here you are in dangerous waters and you could have been torpedoed at any time.

ALBERT GRENZ: We could have yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you sleep very well or didn't sleep at all?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well I slept pretty good. I didn't have trouble after. But I didn't sleep downstairs with the troops. I slept up underneath the gun [INDISCERNIBLE] because I couldn't take it there. Still so many sea sick guys that And they went on. There was so much vomit down there. The ship went this way [VOMITING NOISE] and I couldn't take the smell so that's why I had permission to sleep under the [INDISCERNIBLE] under the guns. And I tied myself to it. My sea bag stayed down there and my sack but I wouldn't. I couldn't take it.

INTERVIEWER: When you arrived at Midway Island was it evening or was it morning?

ALBERT GRENZ: It was Oh it must have been about 3:00, 4:00 in the afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: What was your first impression of Midway?

ALBERT GRENZ: I didn't get much of an impression. I just seen a few trees. I thought that'd be nice. And next thing I know this Red Howard sergeant come bellowing at me saying and he's the one that straightened us out you know. You

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know Red Howard was a sergeant here at that time. And I think he took care of everything around there and we got a good meal.

INTERVIEWER: What was he bellowing at you about?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well to move out, move out, and get going. You go here and there. You know.

INTERVIEWER: How'd you come ashore?

ALBERT GRENZ: We got right off the ship. It docked someway and we got right off the ship. I don't remember getting in another little boat. I remember just stepping off and going to shore.

INTERVIEWER: Where'd you go from there off the ship?

ALBERT GRENZ: I went to a barracks where we checked in for one day. The next day he assigned me to seven-inch guns.

INTERVIEWER: What battery was that?

ALBERT GRENZ: Seven-inch battery. And we only had two there – one and two.

INTERVIEWER: So you were in battery what?

ALBERT GRENZ: One.

INTERVIEWER: And what was your position on the gun?

ALBERT GRENZ: First position was to lift the [INDISCERNIBLE] for the gun. It was 165 pounds. I had another fellow that was assigned to it at first. Because they had some of the third defense battalion there for a couple days and they gave us practice [INDISCERNIBLE]. After that Captain Collins assigned me as a trainer [INDISCERNIBLE] move the ship around. [INDISCERNIBLE] and everything else. It was a little easier job but he kind of favored me I think because I was an old man then.

INTERVIEWER: How old were you?

ALBERT GRENZ: I think 26. You know I was old already and

INTERVIEWER: How old were the people around you on the average?

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ALBERT GRENZ: I mean they were only 20 and under. They were all kids.

INTERVIEWER: Did they nickname you pop or anything?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well some of them said it.

INTERVIEWER: How'd that make you feel?

ALBERT GRENZ: Good. It didn't bother me at all.

INTERVIEWER: What was your rank at the time?

ALBERT GRENZ: I made corporal there but after I was there a month they made me PFC and then a little later corporal. And the second day or third day I was out there Captain Collins come down. I showed him my arms here all bit up and I

INTERVIEWER: All bit up?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: From what?

ALBERT GRENZ: Bed bugs. And I said captain may I talk to you a minute? He said yes. And I said you see these marks here. He said yeah. I said if I sleep in the troop shelter one more time – that's a dugout underground – I said the bed bugs will get me. I said captain may I have your permission to sleep under the [INDISCERNIBLE] bush? He said yeah you can go. Why don't you try it. I got myself my cot and a pad and a [INDISCERNIBLE] and I slept there for 18 months and no bed bugs bothered me or anything. And I had a trail where I went in and the guys that run up to the guns and that there they got one foot off of that path I was awake. You know the hearing was trained to that. So I was pretty good. But getting back... . When I got on the island here they lost my record by shifting around this and that. They had no record when I got out here. Then the sickbay says come on down you've got to take your shots. I had to take all my boot shots over again.

INTERVIEWER: What were shots like in those days? A little different than they are now?

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ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How's that?

ALBERT GRENZ: The needles were thicker and you knew they were going to hit you with it.

INTERVIEWER: Where did they hit you?

ALBERT GRENZ: On the butt and the arms and they really took me over. But the needles today you can put them in and you don't even notice it but that time they had little like a 16 penny nail – you know you had it.

INTERVIEWER: Well it sounds like you had a warm reception when you arrived here at Midway.

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah and it wasn't more than a couple weeks a fellow by the name of [PH] Hafer, he come back from the shower. He jumped on a truck that was driving out there and some way he fell and got hurt. And I just knew him. He just [INDISCERNIBLE] and then the order come up. We need this type of blood. And I had that type of blood so I [INDISCERNIBLE] blood. But in turn I got a nice big steak and onions and was that good. And I never heard anything. About three months ago I got a letter from a fellow by the name of Hafer and I send him [INDISCERNIBLE] I never got any answer. He lived out at Oregon. But the one I knew lived in Minnesota. So I don't He never answered or anything. And I heard that he was crippled and that could have been him. But I never got any reply.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of things did you guys do to pass the time out here?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well there wasn't that much time to pass. We had a little volleyball and a little karate. And because we had eight hours on guard and then we got eight hours of work and the other eight hours was to go in get cleaned up and that. And if you had a little time in the cleaning up you could go to the movie or have the sergeant teach you a little bit of karate and play a little volleyball, watch the gooney

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birds. I'll tell you one thing without those gooney birds there'd been a lot more crazy guys, scary crazy guys out here. But the gooney bird was just as good as a show when they start dancing and that there. And everybody had something to say about them.

INTERVIEWER: Good for moral?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well you're not just kidding. I used to go up to them. I used to try to talk with them and that made a good pastime.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about seeing the gooney birds again?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh I love them.

INTERVIEWER: Are you still talking to them?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh yeah. Every now and then I go up to one. And I said what did you say? And I say don't you call me [INDISCERNIBLE]. I have a good time with them.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah you know what a lot of people have different ways of describing the gooney birds. Could you describe what a gooney bird ritual's like?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well I think it's a rugrat show and they dance and they form their mates and if there's two of them dancing one male will chase the other one away and it'll try to dance with the female. I can't tell the difference but when two hens get together you know who they are.

INTERVIEWER: Sounds like a human ritual.

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah. [INDISCERNIBLE] dancing and that.

INTERVIEWER: There were a number of incidences with Japanese submarines here. Did you see any of that or ... ?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

ALBERT GRENZ: We... . On December [INDISCERNIBLE] after the battle of Midway a sub come in and pretty close and I think he thought Midway belonged to Japan then

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see. So by the time they gave us all the direction and everything else Captain Collins said fire and I know sure we hit that a couple of times and the sub went down. But before that subs used to come out on the bay there and peep up and look around and was called [INDISCERNIBLE] one and we'd all run to the guns and they give us a line and we shot several of the times but I don't know whether we hit anything or not. It was a little on the dark side. But that one after the war I know we hit that definitely.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about the events leading up to the Battle of Midway? How you guys prepared for the battle? And when did you get an indication that there was going to be a battle out here?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well when we landed there there was no barb wire and no landmines or nothing. We were just completing our guns and getting back to the guns. Even the first test, the first shot, after that was completed we took off [INDISCERNIBLE] cover the main part and when the tube was out we had [INDISCERNIBLE] camouflage on there and some way they said just pull it back a little it won't hurt. So they pulled it back a little bit. We fired. All the [PH] scaviola burned off of the wire and the flame come back and burned it off. So I don't know who give the orders. I don't the Captain Collins did because he was more clearheaded. I don't know. But there were several officers out there and one said fire it so off we did. And every time we fired it we had to work two hours to clean it. And the island [INDISCERNIBLE] knew that we fired it because it'd shake. The island would shake. And again we'd built a... . Well I didn't really build them but they had the boxes built and we put them along the beach and had dynamite in it and 16 penny nails. I don't know what kind of method they had to fire them because I didn't get around there too much. I think there was some other people here that know more about dynamite boxes but I know we buried them along there. But we had to string all the barbwire to tiers and about four strands of each and that was a job alone. They got done. They

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were done for the day. Well meals. We had two meals a day. One in the morning after [INDISCERNIBLE]. One was [INDISCERNIBLE] to relax on. And then we had our breakfast and evenings we had our dinner, supper before four o'clock because [INDISCERNIBLE] then we have to stand in the ... and watch and look around over the guns.

INTERVIEWER: What were the meals like out here? What'd you have? Give me a rundown on some of your diet.

ALBERT GRENZ: Meals – I don't know. I can't tell. They were all the same to me. I weighed about 175 pounds when I come out. Because the Navy Hospital treated me good I gained a little weight.

INTERVIEWER: How tall are you?

ALBERT GRENZ: Six foot. Then when I After the Battle of Midway was over I weighed 120 pounds. So our third meal was one cup of coffee. You couldn't drink it. You had to use a spoon to consume it. And one doughnut. And I don't think I missed a meal because I had to have that third meal. And it was brought out by our gun and they delivered it. And I think everybody that in know... . [INDISCERNIBLE] there's no doughnuts left over. Everybody got there's.

INTERVIEWER: What was the ... ?

ALBERT GRENZ: Most of the meals were with gravy, a little bit of meat on toast, and a few little potatoes and that. That's all I remember. I don't remember anything fancy except for the holidays and there weren't too many of them. So

INTERVIEWER: What was the mission of your gun? How was your gun to be used in the defense of the island?

ALBERT GRENZ: To hit the ships out about 11 miles. While our [INDISCERNIBLE] would carry 11 miles and [INDISCERNIBLE] send it out there.

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INTERVIEWER: Would it be safe to say that these two guns were the most powerful guns on Midway?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes and besides the one on [INDISCERNIBLE] they had one seven-inch over there. The next ones were five inches. All the back side of us. I think they had what, two, four... . I know four, six five-inch guns on the backside and we were on this, on the opposite side.

INTERVIEWER: Could your gun fire 360 degrees?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you able on this trip to find out where your gun was positioned or has it disappeared completely?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well as much as I know they disappeared but I heard that a hotel in Honolulu – either the [INDISCERNIBLE] hotel or something – had the one gun there. He called it gun one. And a fellow by the name of Fowler seen it there and he says you're gun is there. But my original gun that we had, rumors were they come off of the [INDISCERNIBLE] and were place here. But the ones they have down at the museum, the naval base, the seven inch, they have [INDISCERNIBLE] they come off the US Baltimore [INDISCERNIBLE] and they've got them on display there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Tell me about the Battle of Midway? How did you know there was going to be a battle? Did you have any indication? And when did that information start to come to you guys?

ALBERT GRENZ: We had indications of it about oh say a week already. It was dribbling around. And we went to work more and more. And I went to Captain Collins. I said can I have your permission to build my own fox hole? I got a 50 gallon of [INDISCERNIBLE]. I'll cut off both ends and sink it in the sand. And I said I can be out, I can hide my head down there. I was up so I can see it works. And I said I'll have a PAR, M1, and pistol with me. And he said yes as long as you keep your head down.

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Well I couldn't keep my head down. I said when they come in and they hit the oil tank first that got me. All that [INDISCERNIBLE]. And then I seen them go for the hanger. You know you couldn't [INDISCERNIBLE]. Tears come to my eyes. I have to tell you the truth.

INTERVIEWER: Okay before we get too far ahead of the battle I want to start your recollection of the battle from that very morning on. So tell me how your personal day started on the Battle of Midway and then take me through the entire day.

ALBERT GRENZ: Well the Battle of Midway, when the [INDISCERNIBLE] one was set I took off for the fox hole. We didn't get anything to eat because I think it was about five o'clock [INDISCERNIBLE] was set.

INTERVIEWER: Five o'clock in the morning?

ALBERT GRENZ: Five o'clock in the morning. And we waited around – everybody on the guns and that. After they started coming in close I still stayed in my fox hole due to the fact it didn't do me any good up at the seven inch and I watched them bomb drop here or there. And one plane shot down and landed about oh from here over to those trees away – that's about 300 yards. And they got one of the guys was killed in that plane. They got another shot down. They got to him, his body too. But the plane that was shot down the closest after [INDISCERNIBLE] was left and they said stick around. They didn't want you to go any place. And the guys took off for the plane because the five-inch guns were maybe 100 yards, maybe less than 100-yards. They dashed there and they tore the plane completely apart. They cut metal. Each one wanted a souvenir. And I think it was Colonel Fraser that got that emblem off of the plane and he had it with him for years in his home. And his last June 4th he donated it to the Marine Memorial in San Diego. We have a part where 60 [INDISCERNIBLE] is putting their stuff in as a souvenir.

INTERVIEWER: We're going to cut right there. We'll continue the story... .

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INTERVIEWER: Al after the plane was being cannibalized for souvenirs did you go over and see the plane?

ALBERT GRENZ: No.

INTERVIEWER: You stayed right where you were?

ALBERT GRENZ: I had to stay there.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think was going to happen next?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well nobody knew because nobody was coming in landing and nobody heard anything else. Only thing we got that first wave of bombing and we were waiting for the other ones. That's why they wouldn't let you [INDISCERNIBLE]. And the ships were only out about 200 miles. Maybe 200 or 300. I don't know. And they [INDISCERNIBLE] except that one sub thought that Midway was secured and they were shot at.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't ask anybody this but was the American flag visible from your position?

ALBERT GRENZ: Not from my position but I understand it went up right after the battle started. Some of the guys said that but I couldn't see it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see the movie maker John Ford around filming?

ALBERT GRENZ: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What did you think was going to happen next?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well we were waiting for the landing but if it wouldn't have been for the navy and then [INDISCERNIBLE] as the plane comes in you know we didn't get all the planes that we sent out. They had P-17s and 24s and the [INDISCERNIBLE] and they all left. We watched them in the morning take off.

INTERVIEWER: So they wouldn't be caught on the ground right?

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ALBERT GRENZ: And I don't think half of them come back. I don't. I really don't know that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have time to think about if there was a landing and the Japanese did get ashore were you going to surrender?

ALBERT GRENZ: No I was not going to surrender.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a general consensus among the men?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I understand there was also an order that you guys were not to surrender? Is that correct?

ALBERT GRENZ: I didn't. I heard something but I didn't get a direct order like that. But when we got the prisoners [INDISCERNIBLE] oh I don't know about 20 prisoners in and you know they had us guard them nearly one on one because otherwise they'd killed them. I had a Sergeant [INDISCERNIBLE] he said let me go down. I'll take care of them. He was about a 30-year-old man already and was he boiled up on that.

INTERVIEWER: So they had to protect the prisoners from being killed by the defenders.

ALBERT GRENZ: They had to protect. And then they took showers and ate in the same room that we take our showers in and in two days – it wasn't two days – they loaded them on the plane and had them out. And I think they took them to Pearl or some place. But here they would have been killed. I'm sure of that.

INTERVIEWER: Feelings were pretty high?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was your own personal feeling?

ALBERT GRENZ: Mine was the same thing. Why should they use our facilities and that? They had no rights. And then it was about four days later we buried the guys that got killed here. I think there was 21 or 20 or something that were casualties.

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Seven Americans were killed. Four Japanese bodies were here. We give them – Americans – we gave them the 21-gun salute. I was part of it. But the Japanese they got a nice burial. I mean they didn't throw them away. They gave them a decent burial which I had hoped they'd give all Americans over there.

INTERVIEWER: With full military honors.

ALBERT GRENZ: No not the military honor but the

INTERVIEWER: The 21-gun salute is a military ... ?

ALBERT GRENZ: Our Americans got that with the flag going but not the Japanese. They didn't have no flag, no anything. But they were fixed up so they get buried at sea decently.

INTERVIEWER: They buried them at sea as well?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes the same way did our men. They loaded them on PT boats and took them out and when they were out far enough – we couldn't hardly see them from the battery – they let them go. And one thing also on the [INDISCERNIBLE] hear them pull the bugle [INDISCERNIBLE]. That I could be mistaken whether they did that [INDISCERNIBLE] while they let the bodies go in the water but ashore I cannot recall blowing the bugle.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have buglers here?

ALBERT GRENZ: I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

ALBERT GRENZ: And that's something I thought of many a times. How come that was? But it's a regular deal that they should have the bugle at any American burial.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any emotion you were feeling as you were burying these guys?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe that to me?

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ALBERT GRENZ: Well it's the same as all. These [INDISCERNIBLE] come down but I [INDISCERNIBLE] as captain says when I order firing, fire. And we had perfect firing just like one shot. And the guys, I think all of them, they had tears in their eyes and couldn't talk when they were going out.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know any of these men that were killed?

ALBERT GRENZ: No I did not.

INTERVIEWER: But they were marines right?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes. That's all accounted. But they Everyone... . If they would have had that bugle going there I bet you there wouldn't have been one clear eye in the bunch. The bugle and that sounds that makes the tears come to your eyes.

INTERVIEWER: When they play [PH] taps?

ALBERT GRENZ: When they play taps. Because I'm on a national rifle squad and I know people standing in there when the bugle goes they can't help themselves. And I know it's the same way would have been here.

INTERVIEWER: Were you scared during the Battle of Midway?

ALBERT GRENZ: Certainly.

INTERVIEWER: What's it like to be scared when you're under fire?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well I can't tell you but you know you get a little scary. It seems like your hair when it stands up or something like that. Like goose pimples come up here. See that's the way I felt.

INTERVIEWER: How did you control your fear?

ALBERT GRENZ: I just had to just stay there and took their orders, what the captain said. Until I tell you different. And the other guys had to stay in the dugout. They didn't let anybody out except I was the only man because I wanted that foxhole. There's about 30 guys, maybe more, that were in the dugouts. When I first come on here I got a registered letter from Safeway Company and they wanted to cancel my

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insurance and they had to have my signature. So I cancelled it and underneath I wrote down if you have any extra Family Circle magazines would you please send them. And I had my name and address and everything on it. About a month later they brought a whole truck load of books and letters that 20 people wrote that they were sending subscription of Reader's Digest and that.

INTERVIEWER: You got such a tremendous response from these people huh?

ALBERT GRENZ: You're not just kidding. And that done me a lot of good.

INTERVIEWER: It built your moral?

ALBERT GRENZ: I passed the magazines out to everybody that wanted them. So you know that people will think of you when you're in trouble.

INTERVIEWER: You guys were in trouble out here weren't you?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah. And the letters I got I couldn't answer them. And I gave them to everybody, read them, answer them and that. But that shows that if somebody watches those things and answers the letters so I don't know you got other questions or ... ?

INTERVIEWER: Sure do. You know you had these two big guns on the island right?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was there competition between you two guns and who was the best?

ALBERT GRENZ: [INDISCERNIBLE] but we shot at targets. Dart number one was just a little better. But they were all trained the same. The dials were set the same [INDISCERNIBLE] each one se the dials.

INTERVIEWER: And what gun were you on?

ALBERT GRENZ: One.

INTERVIEWER: And you guys felt you were the best?

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ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah. And when they had the ship go out there with the target we fired at them and we did alright.

INTERVIEWER: What is the ... ? Did you understand what you had just been through in the Battle of Midway? Did you understand how important it was?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: When did you start to get the information of the rest of the battle?

ALBERT GRENZ: Oh [INDISCERNIBLE] kept us informed that this is going to happen, we lost this many men, and all that. We had another radio. We got a little more out of it but the only thing we got was what the CEO would tell us and

INTERVIEWER: So you had a pretty good idea that you had won the battle?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes we had a good idea. [INDISCERNIBLE] come in the fight men would always tell you that things are going good and that built up the moral. Because hours on here was from say 5:00 in the morning. By 5:00 in the afternoon we were pretty well secured. We didn't have to expect an invasion any more.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you stay on Midway?

ALBERT GRENZ: I stayed on until August in 1943.

INTERVIEWER: And then where'd you go?

ALBERT GRENZ: I went back home and they said you got one year of liberty. I mean you stay in the States for a year. I was okay.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like going home?

ALBERT GRENZ: Good. A lot of pats on the back and all that.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a hometown hero?

ALBERT GRENZ: It didn't bother me but they all respected me because they knew I was on Midway. I got home, my dad being what's it called a world-minded person, he had extras tires. He turned them in. He kept old tires for his car. I come home. He didn't have just a thing [INDISCERNIBLE] tire [INDISCERNIBLE] and I went to the

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ration board. I said I'd like to have four tires for my dad's car. I got a month to waste here and I don't want to fix tires. It was a young fat girl was sitting in the chair there. Feet up there and she says if you go out with me tonight I'll see that you get the four tires. I said no it isn't worth it going out that way.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean that way?

ALBERT GRENZ: I mean she wanted to go out and have a good time with me. Show all the girls that she can take me out. I said no. So I had another date then. In the morning I took the car to go up to Bismarck and had one flat tire. Got her fixed and finally got in there. I went straight to the ration board. Threw my papers down and I said I want tires for the car and looked at it. Took the paper in another room. They looked at my discharge that I was on Midway. He came out – four new tires. Plus sugar and enough gas to last me. So they were good. So I had a good time.

INTERVIEWER: Well there was some newspaper pieces that were written. Would you read me that newspaper piece? Can you do that for me?

ALBERT GRENZ: If I can make it. My glasses are [INDISCERNIBLE].

[NON-INTERVIEW]

ALBERT GRENZ: From the public relation office we learned that Albert G. Grenz son of [INDISCERNIBLE] of Napoleon has been promoted to private first class. And from Albert who is with the US Marine Core at Midway Island we were two months on Midway and feel fine. Please send me the [INDISCERNIBLE]. Here's a poem on Midway. My pockets jingle with dough but my flight is funny. I never I though I would see the day that I have less money and less time than money. There is not a thing to spend it on. No chow, no booze, no dames. The lights go out at six o'clock disrupting the poker games. The nightclubs close. The bars are bare. Babes are fewer than the four leaf clover. There is nothing to do but hit the hay when my long day of work is over. So quickly muzzle the dogs of war and then run not a day longer. Muzzle the

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guns. Turn off the lights so I can spend my pay. I can't see too good. I had my glasses changed and they run together those lines so... . After that I took off. I asked for another 15 days extension. A telegram come back, extension granted. So I took off after my [INDISCERNIBLE]. I went to Camp {INDISCERNIBLE}. Camp of [INDISCERNIBLE] they put me in the lumber yard. Gave me open gate liberty so I could go any time I wanted to and I was there about four months. And the guys there said why don't you put a transfer [INDISCERNIBLE] so I can go overseas. They wanted to go. I said hell I'll be back over there before you even get started. The next day that card and their system dropped and my name was on it. They needed my qualification. Ten days to get aboard ship at Norfolk, Virginia. And it was there they said you can pick up your other orders. So I get there, to Norfolk, Virginia, and got aboard. I got my orders. I thought I was going to go to Europe. No way. Looked around. Here they had 1500 army personnel. Lone ranger. I was the only marine aboard. We took off and we went around Panama Canal and head for Maui. That was where I was supposed to me my guys from the Martial Islands and I was supposed to ... I was on the training program to show them how to [INDISCERNIBLE] tracks of the LSDs without sinking them and show them how to fire the three-inch. I did that about three months. Before that

INTERVIEWER: So you were training amphibious forces for the invasion of the Pacific?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah. Before that they ask for a PX man and they had PX guys that worked but for some reason they didn't get the job and they were ... guys wanted something different to eat and that so I told the first lieutenant I said I'd like to go up there, take that and see if I can pass the test. So I went up, passed the test. They said now how about the bond? I said you go wire him. He'll put the bond up for me - \$10,000 bond. So by the time I got back to the camp which was about 30 miles.

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There was a telegram – bond granted. So I had the PX job but I could do that only in the afternoons because in the mornings I had to train them on this other stuff. But after they come back from the [INDISCERNIBLE] which I was only the [INDISCERNIBLE] I got a fulltime job in the PX.

INTERVIEWER: What was your rank then?

ALBERT GRENZ: Corporal. They asked me whether I wanted to change it and I said no I'm satisfied with corporal because if this is over with I want to go with the [INDISCERNIBLE]. I could have had a good PX rating but I didn't. I believed in [INDISCERNIBLE] work better.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you when World War II ended?

ALBERT GRENZ: Where was I [INDISCERNIBLE]? I was in Maui. The guys were loading ships. Now this is unbelievable. But the ships were coming in the harbor. The guys were loading up ships already. I go to town and I played a Ouija board and I ask where the guys are going. The Ouija board always said no place. They're not leaving. So I go back to camp. A couple days later one of the guys come in. He was from North Dakota, Jamestown, North Dakota, and he says Al we'll see you next time around. I said what do you mean you'll see me next time around. I said those ships out there are not leaving the bay for another invasion? Boy they got a little [INDISCERNIBLE]. He said I got 20 to one that we're leaving. I said I got my dollar. Here. Money didn't mean much. They couldn't spend it much there. And he goes out there and talks to a couple friends. Al's betting 20 to one that those ships aren't leaving – we're not leaving for another invasion. And [INDISCERNIBLE] they come in, sign up. I want some of that money. I don't know how many. I should have kept record but it wasn't more than five days later the first A-bomb was dropped and orders were held up a little bit. Then the second A-bomb was dropped. Good old Colonel calls me in and he says where did you get that [INDISCERNIBLE] from? He

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[INDISCERNIBLE] court marshaled me. I said colonel I played the Ouija board and I am [INDISCERNIBLE] and that's what the Ouija board said and he let me by. I gave all the kids their money back because I was only too glad it was over with.

INTERVIEWER: How did you celebrate VJ Day?

ALBERT GRENZ: It was pretty.... They didn't fire any shots.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah but how did you celebrate?

ALBERT GRENZ: I had to work. I worked in the PX. I kept [INDISCERNIBLE] a couple hours. And let them have a good time. Some of those guys whatever I earned a profit in that PX stayed here and there was 10 units in the first [INDISCERNIBLE] battalion. When they come back from Iwo Jima each one unit bunch had 100 free cases of beer. They could do whatever they want with it. Take all 100 or they could take 25 and go down to the beach and celebrate. But some of those guys had some of that beer left and they did celebrate down at the beach but I myself I didn't celebrate. I just helped them get extra hours on the PX.

INTERVIEWER: Well in a sense you helped them celebrate right?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well I didn't help really celebrate. But the officers celebrated. I was only too glad it was over with.

INTERVIEWER: A lot of people have said that Midway was a crossroads of their life. Was it a crossroads for you?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well at first it hurt me being out here. I know I never said much to my parents what went on here. They didn't know it and they didn't ask and I didn't tell them. Even my kids, until my kids start to go to college, I told them a few things and that there. And one daughter picked up all my souvenirs, some of them. I mean like my bracelet [INDISCERNIBLE] from the Jap plane you can't buy that from her and a few things. But after 20 or 25 years I began to leave loose. You know and then about 20 years ago I said I wish I could go back to Midway to see how it is. So

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[INDISCERNIBLE] let me start up a Midway union. My wife said no way you won't get anybody for this here. I say well we dropped it for that. The next year I went again and I asked, let me advertise for it. So I advertised in the American Legion and the VFW paper. I get one response from [INDISCERNIBLE], South Dakota. I said let's drive down there and have steak with them. We went to tea at south of Sioux Falls. That's about 300 miles. And we got together, had a big steak and sat around three hours and when I left he gave me a \$10 bill. He said use it for stamps. Today this man has never gone to a reunion because he has a heart condition. And he is still living and that was 18 years ago.

INTERVIEWER: Now this reunion group has grown quite a bit. Are you real happy about that?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes I am. When I got home from The next day I had a letter from a Mel Harris from Sacramento. I called him. I say we're going to fly out. Pick us up at the airport and we'll see you. I want to talk to you about this here. So we went and met him. Went to San Francisco and Marine Memorial. We talked to them. Rented 25 rooms. The wife was mad due to the fact only three guys and 25 rooms. I said we'll start advertising more. So we did. We got a couple more people. And she was a little disappointed. We only had about six people that we knew that were coming. And nobody out there answered. And we got back and the next morning we woke up. [INDISCERNIBLE] hi Al. [INDISCERNIBLE] and they start one by one coming in the room there. And Ned [INDISCERNIBLE] he was a man that really When we met the first time on a Friday he said I have got to be back to San Diego for a wedding but I said I'll be down here Saturday morning and [INDISCERNIBLE]. He flew down and he come back and he helped me. And when we met Saturday morning at 10:00 to try to get some the colonels and that had come up here. We had 26 people that [INDISCERNIBLE].

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INTERVIEWER: When did this first meeting take place?

ALBERT GRENZ: June Seventeen years ago whatever that figures out.

INTERVIEWER: And this organization has grown to how many now?

ALBERT GRENZ: Over 800. And I asked the guys somebody take record and make ...
. Ned says let's get a [INDISCERNIBLE]. I got the [INDISCERNIBLE] fixed up. Ned and
everything else, they all signed it and we set the date, the next time we meet in San
Diego. Ned is the one that even He was my secretary. If I run into a problem I call
Ned.

INTERVIEWER: How did the idea of coming back to Midway start?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well the 40th we wanted to come back. We couldn't. And due to the
fact that you wouldn't let [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: Al how did this idea of coming back to Midway get started?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well when we had our first meetings, I think it was Colonel Fraser,
he said I'll try to get you going. It was his project but he couldn't get it going. We
could get in here or got permission to land. We couldn't get a plane and anything
else.

INTERVIEWER: The military wasn't helping you at all?

ALBERT GRENZ: Nobody. Nothing. We couldn't get no help, no place. And only for
the 40th and we would have liked to come out [INDISCERNIBLE]. We knew it wasn't
going to happen. So we had the 50th reunion.

INTERVIEWER: How did you know it wasn't going to happen?

ALBERT GRENZ: Because they tried a while, a couple of months, and then they had
to get going, if they wanted to have the real one in San Diego we had to get going on
that.

INTERVIEWER: Because you had two things happening – a trip either back to
Midway or the convention in San Diego?

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ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And you put the emphasis on the convention?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes. But if it would have come that you could come out here I would have come out. But Ned didn't look good enough. Because he was in charge of it.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you finally get here?

ALBERT GRENZ: How I got here?

INTERVIEWER: Well how did this all happen that you came on this trip?

ALBERT GRENZ: I don't know. We had questionnaires on that that we got from Honolulu I think [INDISCERNIBLE] and I answered it and I said I would love to go and with a little communication finally they said okay you're on the list.

INTERVIEWER: So you got a contact from Honolulu from Mike Kobe and that's how this trip all got started?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah and was I happy when I got the permission to go.

INTERVIEWER: Because your dream had been from the beginning to come back here right?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So how do you feel being back?

ALBERT GRENZ: It's a lot of change and that and I feel good. I had a good time and I enjoyed it and I think all the rest of them guys were enjoying it.

INTERVIEWER: When you hear the word, rather the phrase, the Battle of Midway what's that mean to you?

ALBERT GRENZ: It means it was scrimmage. That's all I can say. Scary deal because we heard what they were doing down below. They weren't letting anybody live with that there. They were doing away with all the marines and that so a little scary but ...

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INTERVIEWER: Would it be safe to say this was your dream come true?

ALBERT GRENZ: My dream was to come back on the island after I started [INDISCERNIBLE]. My wife said forget about that Midway. Yeah I said I would. [INDISCERNIBLE]. And I'll tell you one thing if we'd had meals like that [INDISCERNIBLE] I said I'd still be here. [INDISCERNIBLE] only thing is [INDISCERNIBLE] rainy and with my cold [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: When you see the symbol United States Marine Core what's that mean to you?

ALBERT GRENZ: Stand up and salute. I believe that. I belong to the Marine Core League or anything. My Marine Core League had its anniversary. Tonight is the 10th. They have their anniversary ball tonight and they're going to have a big cake. They're going to have a special auction – the Marine Core League there – because they took a foolish step and lost a little money in bingo. You know they thought maybe they could raise bingo money. They couldn't. So they're having an auction tonight. I donated several things for them. And everybody around. I still got my big campaign hat. I won't donate that. That's 50 years old – that old campaign hat.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little about that campaign hat. Where'd you get that?

ALBERT GRENZ: I got that [INDISCERNIBLE]. I bought in San Diego and I didn't ... I shipped it home with some of my other stuff. That's where it stayed.

INTERVIEWER: When did you buy it?

ALBERT GRENZ: 1941.

INTERVIEWER: And you've had it all this time?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yes. The campaign, when I was in the hospital there's where I sent it home, due to the fact a fellow in the hospital wanted to get rid of it so I got it.

INTERVIEWER: What's that hat mean to you?

ALBERT GRENZ: I won't let nobody have it. It's precious to me.

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INTERVIEWER: Why?

ALBERT GRENZ: Well I don't know. Just because of the symbol. I never had to use it for drilling. The only time I really drilled the troops is out here on the new runway made of metal.

INTERVIEWER: But why's the hat a symbol to you?

ALBERT GRENZ: A hat of authority. When the sergeant wore it, when he wore the hat you saluted no matter if it was corporal or what or a PFC under that hat you saluted that hat.

INTERVIEWER: So that hat is an embodiment of how you feel about the core?

ALBERT GRENZ: I feel good about the core.

INTERVIEWER: And so when you see the hat you see the core?

ALBERT GRENZ: Yeah. I told, a long time ago, when I die I want to be buried in my Marine Core blues. But when I got divorced the wife destroyed all that. So I have to skip that unless my present wife can get a [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: What will you do with your hat?

ALBERT GRENZ: I don't know. I think my grandson will get it.

INTERVIEWER: You don't want to be buried with your hat?

ALBERT GRENZ: Not with it. You couldn't get buried with that hat.

INTERVIEWER: Slip it in the coffin?

ALBERT GRENZ: Put it on top yes. I belong to eight organizations. By the time each one's got their hat on there you can't put nothing on. But getting here on drilling I got tonsillitis while they were building the runway here putting the metal slabs down. I run the [INDISCERNIBLE] some times a couple hours and [INDISCERNIBLE] my tonsils. I sat in an old wooden chair like that. He went there, pulled them out, and he says give me a couple aspirin to send me back. And my voice changed so much that when I got on the guns two days later [INDISCERNIBLE] was up there he said testing gun. I

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said gun one, aye, aye. And lieutenant threw the phones down and started going down to the [INDISCERNIBLE] tower. [INDISCERNIBLE] was asking where are you going? I'm going down to the guns. There's a girl down there. So until the captain told him different. But when I took the troops out to drill on the airport [INDISCERNIBLE] it sounded like an old lady and they went out and they gladly marched. And the first thing you know a couple of them from the five-inch guns come in and march with us. And this last reunion this one guy says I remember that because I marched when you yelled at us. And still it's been a little high and that voice.

INTERVIEWER: We got a couple more questions. Bill?

SECOND INTERVIEWER: Al did they bring the food out to you at the guns or did you go somewhere to get it?

ALBERT GRENZ: No, no they brought it out. We had a little small [INDISCERNIBLE] there. They brought it there. Each one got the serving. One slice of bread and gravy on it. I don't know what else. A cup of coffee. And one day a slice of bread dropped in the sand, two guys nearly tore their hair out to get it.

SECOND INTERVIEWER: Just one clarification. Did you say you used scaviola for camouflage?

ALBERT GRENZ: No we made this out of tore sheets up of burlap and cut them and painted them green and put them up there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay I'd like to thank you very much Al.

[END AUDIO]